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-USSR-

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FOREWORD

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WHAT IS THE HARM OF BAPTISM

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[Following is the translation of an article by P. Kausanskiy in Agitator, No 20, Moscow, November 1960, pages 41-44.]

What is baptism? The word "baptism" comes from the Greek baptisma, to immerse; it is the mode of christening Christians. Baptism is [also] a variety of Christianity. It differs from the Greek Orthodox and Catholic churches only by slightly differing interpretation of the Bible. It denies church luxury, pomp in ceremonies and the worship of icons, saints, and relics. But all of these differences are not important. The Baptists preach vigorously the fundamental thesis of religion: believe in God, in the life to come, in Hell and Paradise, immortality and the soul; and they consider the Bible as the "unique rule of faith and self-conduct."

Baptism [the Baptist denomination] originated in England at the beginning of the XVII Century. Capitalism accepted it, since this kind of religion was profitable for the exploiters; it covered up the class contradictions of bourgeois society, preached the false "brotherhood of capitalists and workers, landlords and peasants."

It is not by chance that of the 22 million members of this group, 19 million live in the United States -- the center of the world Baptist Union. Baptist religious organizations have been converted into a prop of US capitalism; they are reactionary in other countries.

In Russia, Baptists appeared for the first time in the sixties of the XIX Century. Leadership was at once grasped by the bourgeoisie-merchants, industrialists, kulaks -- and by part of the Petersburg aristocracy. All activities of the pre-revolutionary Baptists were connected with the treachery against the interests of the working people: they supported absolutism in the suppression of the 1905 Revolution; they blessed the counterrevolutionary Kadet party; and they justified Russia's participation in the imperialistic war.

They met the Great October with hostility, called the Soviets the breed of the anti-Christ, predicted a quick destruction of the "Godless Bolsheviks," and openly invited the overthrow of the Workers-Peasants Regime. During the Civil War, on religious pretenses, the

Baptists refused to serve in the Red Army. However, they served in the White Army.

Life has unveiled their hypocrisy and deceit and, indeed, has shown that the Soviet regime is the best friend of the people; and Communists are the most loyal defenders of the people's interests. The great socialist reforms in town and village, and the liquidation of all forms of suppression, poverty, and ignorance, was detrimental to the influence of the Baptists. In 1944, trying to preserve their organization, the Baptists united with the Evangelists, and a year later they were joined by the Pentecostals. Feeling their weakness, they organized groups which united with other religious sects to adapt themselves to the new conditions and to preserve their influence on various groups of believers.

What is the harm of Baptism? It preaches ideas that are alien to the Soviet people, alien morals, spiritual darkness and ignorance. In its teachings and deeds clearly appears a reactionary substance of sectarianism, departure from life, seclusion, and impassivity. They are afraid of the fresh breath of life, of the truth and force of knowledge. For Baptism, as in general for any kind of religious ideology, poverty of ideas is extremely characteristic.

In [Baptist] communities it is required that one depend only on God in everything; as they say, to seek seclusion with God. The believers are obliged to pray every day and to refer to the Bible, which is the only source of the perception of God. The Baptists say that it is a sin to read books and newspapers, to have a radio, go to the movies or to clubs, meetings and lectures. Thus, a foundation is established for the separation of the believers from society, from the interests of the country, from our rich reality and science. Utilizing the limited knowledge of the majority of believers, the preachers inspire them in the belief that the world was created and is governed by God and that it is beyond human ability to gain knowledge and change anything.

To what do they consecrate man? To passive crawling before the forces and objective laws of nature and society. They kill the thirst of knowledge in man, and kill his aspiration for learning and to conquer the surrounding world, to create happiness on earth. With us it is man, not God, who is master of all. Man, applying his bright mind and hard-working hands, created and sent into the atmosphere rockets, increased the fertility of the virgin lands, lighted towns and villages with electricity, diverted the beds of rivers, filled up new seas, and invented computers. It is not possible to enumerate all his achievements. The whole beauty of the earth and our good life are neither the result of prayers nor the products of miracles. They are created by you, brave and wise man.

The Baptists strive with all their forces to assert that, "The earth could not be turned into a living object by itself. Matter itself is dead. The intervention of God was required." And there are

still people who believe in the fairy tale that man, as a brick, was made by the "Creator" from clay. Is it not clear that all of this is a story, a deceit? Look around you, open your heart to the truth and to light, and understand that you were moving in the wrong direction.

It is true that at present there are ministers who, through powerful suppression of incontestable facts, try to explain the success of science by stating that it is God who reveals to man the laws of science.

Of what does this speak? It speaks of the intention of the sectarians to reconcile the irreconcilable -- science and religion -- in order to strengthen the Baptist position and to preserve its authority among the rank and file sectarians. All of their activities are concentrated toward implanting the blind belief taught in the Middle Ages: "Belief is above the mind"; toward alienating all the sectarians from knowledge which undermines belief in biblical myths and fabrications.

But truth is strong in life. It is our best ally in the struggle for those who are still wrapped in the Baptist spider's web.

Hope for the grace of God is sterile.

All the actions of the Baptists are performed to save their own souls. But this is nothing else but a sermon of selfishness, individualism. Sometimes it happens that they take care of other men: help them repair their houses or give them money. But this they do in order to make dependents of them.

We do not like this moral. We find happiness in collectivism. We work and rest together, share our joy and grief. Together we solve our economic and scientific problems; together we say good bye to the departing day and welcome the coming one that brings us closer to Communism. It is a pleasure for all of us when our neighbor celebrates his moving into a new house. A sonorous laugh or the smile of a child are as dear to us as our own. Our hearts are filled with joy when we have a rendezvous with our beloved, but not with Christ.

How is it possible to immure the beauty and power of man? Nature gave him an inexhaustible source of energy, will, and an inextinguishable mind. The sectarians try to deprive man of all these and make him an impotent slave -- "A sheep in Christ's fold." With this in mind they praise illness and distress, which, they say, bring us nearer to God. "Misfortunes are sacred, blessed, therefore one should be proud of having them. They are sent by God as a trial. We should enjoy grief because the best traits come forth with it: love of God and the feeling of our own feebliness. Is it not clear to every man that grief and misfortune bend a person down, strangle morality, and make him hopeless? Happiness is not in the life to come, but here on our wonderful earth, which we decorate with gardens and flowers, beautiful buildings and roads. This earth we love with all our heart as we love our mothers, and our own children. On this earth we are erecting the new building of Communism.

The sectarians sow pessimism, passivism, servility. They preach that man is the "wonder of the earth," that the real life begins after

death in Paradise. They devote their own lives to the anticipation of death, to preparation for death. Hundreds of Baptist songs glorify death since death brings the "bright feeling of happiness" for meeting Christ. Therefore, the day of death is better than the day a man was born.

Shocking, but such is the moral of the Baptists. It is strange and terrible to observe how people, despite sane thought and the needs of man, meet together to glorify in their songs and prayers in disease, illness and unhappiness, and how the weak and dirty hand of ignorance shuts their eyes so that they cannot see the light of knowledge and are deprived of the joy of living, and are dragged into darkness and death.

A former Baptist, V. Dubrova, tells us that when the Semenov, husband and wife, from Cherekhov became sick, the leaders of the Baptist community exhorted them to "pray for the 'salvation of their souls'." The Semenovs followed this advice. And the result? Semenov died and his wife became blind. If, instead of praying, they had turned to a doctor, they would have been saved.

In Baptist sermons, a non-existent heavenly motherland, the sharp hostility of Baptism toward Marxist-Leninist ideology frankly appears. It demonstrates the absolute irreconcilability of Baptism with the devoted love of our people to their socialist motherland and to the idea of Soviet patriotism.

The Baptists advertise such commandments as "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and they also prohibit smoking and drinking wine as proof of the "purity" of Baptist sectarians. These "beautiful" words are merely an enticement to attract more people into their sects. Life tears off the mask of their hypocrisy and unveils the improper activities of the "blessed."

The newspaper Izvestia tells about the terrible fate of Natasha Zhichalina, who learned after her marriage that her husband was a Baptist. Gavriil Kopnin [the husband] insisted that Natasha tear herself away from the Komsomol and quit her job and studies. But the young woman did not want to be his house-slave. Then the Baptist brutally killed her. What was the reaction of his "brothers in Christ"? When the murderer was on trial, they begged the court to "forfeit him; God is his judge."

The Krasnoyarsk Baptist Cherepanov tried to force his tenant, the mother of two children, to cohabit with him. When she refused, he attempted to kill her. The minister Zabolotnyy from Armavir, like many another Baptist minister, embezzled 43,000 rubles of community money.

Many Baptist communities became the refuge of various rouses and people of dark pasts. In the Beloretzsk community (Bashkiria) there were the following Baptist leaders: I. Lille, who was tried for his calumniations of Soviet reality and connection with representatives of bourgeois countries; the vicious F. Parfinenko was previously tried

for his anti-Soviet activity; these two were followed by D. Ustachenko, twice tried for anti-Soviet agitation. The latter, although entirely healthy, walked on crutches for a long time, prayed to God for "recovery" and, once, after finishing a prayer, threw away his crutches and began to dance. However, it was definitely determined by doctors that Ustachenko had always been healthy and needed no recovery.

V. I. Zakharov, who for a long time was leader of a Baptist community in Sverdlovsk, was actually a US spy. N. Polovodov, one of his collaborators, who broke with the dark past, said: "We were directed to use in our 'work' local believer-sectarians. Preaching religion, we had to work on behalf of an overseas country, prepare espionage reports, and carry out diversionary work...; using 'God's word' we had to weaken the vigilance of Soviet citizens and prepare a 'fifth column' in the event of a future war. Preacher Ryabovoy from Berezovskoye, whom his 'brothers' considered an honest man, was Hitler's policeman during World War II. He helped the Fascists fight partisans and to collect grain from the peasants. There are 20 young girls on his conscience. They were sent to the Fascist country for hard labor.

Only naive people can believe that Baptist morals are the most humanitarian.

History teaches that the most criminal acts, violence, wars, and destruction performed during the 2000-year era of Christianity found their justification in Christianity itself. Baptism follows the same line.

It is not by chance that V. I. Lenin named this whole system of lies and swindle, the promise to workers of any reform if they refused to partake in the revolutionary struggle, after Lloyd George, who was a Baptist. The Baptist Fuller, and no one else, ordered the murder of US workers Sacco and Venzetti. The Baptist millionaires, the Rockefellers, are known to the world as the most arrogant exploiters. Their dollars are washed in the sweat and blood of workers. Baptist Truman issued the inhuman order to use atom bombs over the peaceful residents of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and to start the bloody war in Korea. It is well known that in criminality the US occupies first place in the world. Well, then, about what humanity can we now speak?

The teachings of the Baptists bring great harm: "Love your enemies," "There is no power but God's." In reality, the intrusion of Hitler's hordes into our country and their brutality and violence were justified by the above in World War II. K. Sudnoka, a former Baptist, remembers that during the Fascist occupation the leaders of the Mogilev Baptist community taught that: "All power is from God; therefore, the arrival of the Germans in our country is the will of God." This is treachery to the motherland, to our own people.

At present the sectarians try to give a somewhat different interpretation of their religious teachings regarding love of one's enemies. They say that this pertains to "personal enemies." But the Fascists who attacked our country, are they not personal enemies of Soviet citizens? The imperialists who stand for armament races and

for bloody wars, are they not the personal enemies of every working man, of every freedom-loving person? Certainly, they are.

Preachers of "love your enemies" obstruct our fight against bandits, hooligans, plunderers, and other dirty people. When the Odessa Baptist Derdiyenko was asked once what he would do if in his presence hooligans attacked his beloved girl friend, Derdiyenko thought for a moment and answered, "I would pray to God that He should send the militia."

For a successful campaign against Baptism it is necessary to consider the peculiarity of this organization. The Baptist Sect is highly concentrated. One should remember that active preachers represent a great portion of the believers. Each Baptist is instructed in how to attract new people. Many members are well acquainted with the Bible. An atheist agitator will have success only if he conducts his agitation well armed to fight biblical tales and supported by the real facts of our life and by the achievements of science and technology. Baptists carry their active work among women more often than among men, because the former stay away from productive activities and from public life. In Moscow, 80% of the [Baptist] community's members are women, and in other communities the majority of members are women also. For this reason, success in the struggle with Baptists depends on work with women. It is necessary to draw women into public life, work, and cultural activities that embrace great masses, and to conduct individual discussions with them.

Baptist preachers strive particularly to attract people who have had misfortunes (a woman whose husband drinks excessively, a deceived girl, a mother whose child died, etc.). They resort to small material help and persuasion, flattery and fright.

Baptism has a particularly pernicious influence on children. How does one protect children from the sectarians? The law forbids the induction of minors into religious associations. It is necessary to persecute very strictly those who break this law. It is the duty of agitators to raise public opinion against those who cripple children spiritually, who deprive them of the sun and of their right to enjoy happiness on earth. The collectives of enterprises, kolkhozes, and sovkhozes should defend minors and, if necessary, parent-believers should be deprived of their rights of guardianship and parenthood. Our society will raise and educate brave, industrious, and cheerful children.

One of the principal forms of atheistic propaganda is close work with individuals. It is necessary to know each member of the sect, conduct discussions with each of them separately, provide each with popular-scientific literature, demonstrate interest in each member's work, draw him into public life. The atheists of Cherkassy, in the Ukraine, using close work with individuals, were able to induce Baptists to attend lectures and movies. Each Baptist received a personal invitation from the agitator.

Great help may be rendered to believers by the book My byli baptistami (We Were Baptists), Moscow, Gospolizdat, 1960. This book should be recommended to believers.

The atheist must not only know each adult Baptist, but also his children, neighbors, and acquaintances. Then, through active work, he can paralyze the influence of the religious preachers.

Collectives should take care of each person, including believers, and render to each of them support and help. Against the hypocrisy of Baptists regarding the "saving of souls," we must show real moral and material help to all people and take active interest in their fate. Where real collectivism is active, Baptist preachers are not able to exploit the misfortunes of persons for their own aims.

In the decision of the CC CPSU "On Problems of Party Propaganda in Contemporary Conditions," it is noted that individual leaders "...sometimes occupy passive, defensive positions toward religious ideology which is hostile to Marxism-Leninism." The struggle with hostile ideology, including that of the Baptists, must be active and have offensive character.

Religious believers will be helped to become free from their delusions when the hostile nature of Baptism is unveiled through patient, scientifically organized propaganda.

What an agitator should read: On Baptism.

My byli baptistami (We Were Baptists), collection, Gospolizdat, 1960.

Pochemu my porvali s religiyey (Why We Broke With Religion), collection, Gospolizdat, 1959.

L. A. Serdobol'skaya, Reaktsionnaya sushchnost' baptizma (The Reactionary Essence of Baptism), Lenizdat, 1960.

I. S. Valisevich, Religioznye sekty baptistov i iyegovistov (The Religious Sects of the Baptists and Jehovahists), Irkutsk, 1958.

L. I. Mitrokhin, "On Contemporary Baptism," Nauka i religiya, No 5, 1960.